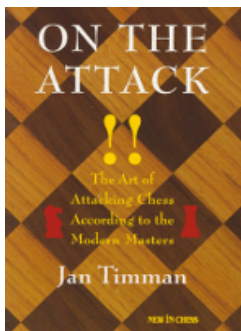




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



CHESTHEATRE

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Dangerous Brains

At the European team championship that was recently held in Novi Sad a nice light-weight game was won by Luke McShane against Ivan Cheparinov.

McShane, born in 1984, was second on the world ranking list for juniors in 2004, when Teimur Radjabov was first, but nowadays he doesn't play very often. Checking his bio on Wikipedia, I found that after finishing his studies – philosophy and mathematics at Oxford – he found a job as a trader at the famous, or if you wish, infamous bank, Goldman Sachs.

In some respects his new career will certainly be preferable to that of a professional chess player, as I read that Goldman Sachs has set aside \$16.7 billion this year to pay bonuses to their employees. They really care for their breadwinners. Though one shouldn't begrudge Luke McShane his new niche, Goldman Sachs's gain is the chess world's loss.



Luke McShane

A few months ago the American humorist Calvin Trillin explained in *The New York Times*, half seriously and half for fun, that the financial crises of the past decades arose because bright people had started to work for Wall Street. He means chess players, I thought.

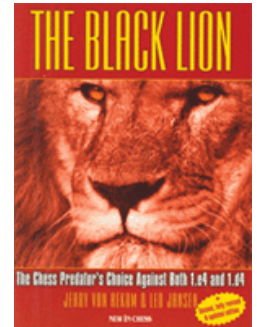
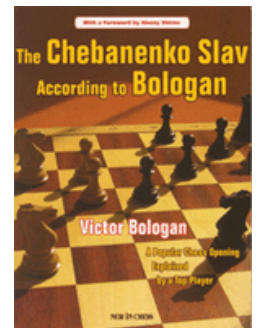
Were there then no bright people on Wall Street in the past? According to Trillin there were not. His experience had been that, in the good old days, his university's alumni had income inversely proportional to their academic accomplishments.

The really bright students had become teachers or professors of, let's say, physics or mathematics. They had a profession that was the joy of their life and financially speaking they had a secure life, with all the traditional middle-class longings comfortably fulfilled.

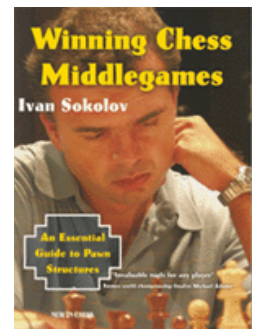
The less gifted went to work in the financial sector and became rich. This way everybody was happy.

The idyllic division of work, satisfaction, and income ended because on one hand, the comfortable middle-class existence of the intellectual class came under severe pressure, and on the other hand, the riches of the people on Wall Street became so monstrously big that they became alluring even for intellectuals. The bright people began to migrate to Wall Street, with devastating effects.

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The new generation of clever youngsters invented ingenious financial products, supported by razor-sharp computer programs aimed at reaping a rich harvest in split seconds, something that had been far beyond the intellectual powers of the simple and relatively innocent plodders, their elders who were still nominally the bosses of a world they couldn't really understand anymore.

These plodders could only sit back, happily noticing that they were becoming as rich as never before because of the financial wizardry of their underlings.

So, my reading of Trillin's article suggested that it had been the chess players who had caused the financial crisis, the chess players and their like.

Luke McShane is only one example of a successful chess player who went into finance. There are many, and among my own friends there is Jeroen Piket, who gave up a fine chess career to nurse the fortune of the chess patron Joop van Oosterom, sponsor of the yearly Amber tournament and many others.

If Trillin is right, the world can only be thankful that most chess professionals have stuck to their jobs, oblivious to the lure of the mammon. The quirky genius Alexander Morozvich has sometimes hinted that he might be tempted by other occupations and we can only shiver when we think of what he might be up to in the great world outside. As a nuclear physicist, he would find a way to let the universe disappear into a black hole and as a financial wizard, he might find the blueprint for a perfectly working economy, completely trimmed of the messy presence of human beings.

To come back to the game of Luke McShane that instigated this train of thought, it is a fine example of "gifted amateur beats professional." The amateur has no time to study the intricacies of modern opening theory and he realizes that against a specialist such as Ivan Cheparinov, it would be senseless to try.

When he triumphs with a simple common sense scheme, amateurs rejoice, while many professionals would echo the famous lament of Aron Nimzowitsch, addressed to Milan Vidmar, who apart from a world-class chess player was also an electrical engineer: why don't you go back to your transformers?

McShane, L (2615) – Cheparinov, I (2667)

17th TCh-Eur Novi Sad SRB (3), 24.10.2009

Sicilian Defense [B21]

1.e2-e4 c7-c5 2.d2-d3 Nb8-c6 3.f2-f4 g7-g6 4.Ng1-f3 Bf8-g7 5.Bf1-e2 d7-d6 6.0-0 Ng8-f6

In Larsen-Fischer, sixth game of the candidates' match, Denver 1971, Fischer played 6...e6 7. Na3 Nge7. Black's knight on f6 gives White more possibilities for a kingside attack, but for the moment Black has no reason to worry.

7.Qd1-e1 0-0 8.Qe1-h4



"To be honest" – a favorite expression of Anand's, just like "I must admit," when there is nothing devious to admit – White's attack looks quite primitive.

A primitive weapon in the hands of a man who is not primitive at all, will turn out as a devastating weapon.

8...c5-c4 9.Kg1-h1 c4xd3 10.c2xd3 Bc8-g4 11.Nb1-c3 Bg4xf3 12.Be2xf3 Qd8-b6 13.Bf3-d1

So much for primitivism. This is a subtle move. The bishop will be redeployed to great effect.

13...Qb6-a6

Too optimistic. The queen was well-placed at b6 and he should have played a normal developing move; e.g., 13...Rac8.

14.Rf1-f3 Rf8-c8 15.Rf3-h3 h7-h5 16.f4-f5 Nc6-e5 17.Bc1-g5



Now it is clear that Black's queen should be at b6. Not only because in that case b2 would be attacked, but in some variations the move Ne5-g4 would hamper White's attack.

17...Kg8-f8

A sure sign of trouble. There is no good defense anymore against White's attack.

18.f5xg6 f7xg6 19.Bd1-b3 Ne5xd3 20.Rh3-f3 1-0

After 20.Rf1 Nc5, Black would be able to eliminate White's Bb3, but now it's over. After 20...Ne5 21.Bxf6 Nxf3 22.Bxe7+ Ke8 23.gxf3, White would win easily.

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